

Mary Steinhauer-Kula ~ Chief School Administrator Zachary Slaven ~ Assistant Principal Melanie M. Allen ~ Business Administrator/Board Secretary	Jennifer Corley ~ Executive Secretary Heidi Milward ~ School/CST Secretary
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Deerfield Township School District School Reopening Update

July 28, 2020

Dear DTS Families,

Thank you for your input through the completion of the school reopening surveys as well as phone, email and Zoom conversations. Utilizing this input from you as well as students, staff, administrators and Board of Education members on our District Restart Committee, our district is working on the details of our plan for the reopening of school in September.

We are required by the NJDOE to implement certain “minimum standards,” as outlined in their publication, “The Road Back”. Some examples include implementing screening protocols, maintaining social distancing to the extent possible, limiting mixing of groups of students and avoiding large group gatherings such as eating in the cafeteria.

In addition to utilizing the Road Back guidance when deciding on our reopening options, we relied on input from parent and staff surveys and feedback. As such, guiding factors in our decision-making process and plans have included:

- Greater need for more in-person instruction for our youngest students and those with greater learning needs
- Parent interest in a full remote learning option (approx. 30% of survey respondents) (NOTE: We decided early on to provide this option but it is now required of all districts to do so.)
- Social distancing in classrooms, hallways and buses, to the greatest extent possible
- Allowing for increased cleaning
- Improving delivery of remote instruction through increased student-teacher interaction

Our top priority has and will continue to be the health and safety of our students, staff and families. We know that the more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. We are balancing that with the need for school to reopen and feel we have come up with what will best work for our school community, giving parents a choice and doing our best to accommodate our youngest and most vulnerable student populations.

While we still have details to work out, I want to share our general plan with regard to our learning options and schedule. There will be two options as follows:

Option #1: Full-Time Remote Learning, as requested by a family

Families can choose this option based on their concerns about the potential for virus exposure because of their children being in the school building. This option may be selected because:

- the parent/guardian does not feel safe sending their child to school during the pandemic,
- the child is in a high-risk category due to their own health condition,
- the child lives with a family member who is in a high-risk category due to a health condition,
- the child lives with a family member who is an essential employee.

A combination of live and pre-recorded instruction will be provided for all subject areas through remote learning. Teacher-directed activities will fulfill 3-5 hours per day depending on the grade of the child and his/her learning needs. Specific schedules will be released to each family in September. Families requesting this option for one or more of their children must commit to the option for the first trimester.

Option #2: Hybrid Learning Schedule

With this option, students receive a combination of in-person instruction on an early-dismissal schedule and remote learning at home. To the extent possible, students will be with the same group (a cohort). This will reduce contact with shared surfaces and allow for a targeted quarantine when positive cases arise. Following CDC guidance, local health department recommendations and proposed Board policies related to COVID-19, in this option children must:

- wear a mask on the school buses,
- have their temperature taken every morning prior to entering the school building,
- wear a mask in the hallways,
- wear a mask in the classroom because social distancing cannot be achieved,
- due to a rigorous cleaning schedule, students may need to follow a bathroom schedule,
- adhere to increased routine handwashing and sanitizing,
- be isolated if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms & get picked up within 30 minutes of determining illness.

Uniforms may be worn but will not be required. We will still have a dress code policy; it just won't include the requirement of school uniforms. We wanted to make sure you were informed now about the relaxation of the policy for planning purposes but will be sure to follow up with details or clothing that is permitted and not permitted. You will be required to provide cloth face masks for your children that cover the mouth and nose and fit snugly against the sides of the face. There are no certain colors required and masks can have patterns or writing (just nothing offensive or inappropriate for school). Children need to be able to put on their own face masks and the masks should be clearly labeled with the student's name.

For the remote learning days, there will be a structured schedule of live instruction with teachers through Zoom sessions and pre-recorded teacher videos, web links, skills programs, and/or selected choice activities. Students will also receive small group and/or individual sessions for tutoring, specialized support, and teletherapy services. Families requesting this option for one or more of their children may change to the full-time remote learning (Option 1). We would just ask that, when possible, you give us a two-week advance notice for planning purposes.

Students on the hybrid learning schedule will be in one of 3 groups as follows:

- The majority of students in grades 2-8 will be in either Group A or Group B.
- All students in Preschool, Kindergarten and First Grade will be in Group C.
- Some Special Education students, students in need of English Language Supports and other vulnerable students as determined by the district will be in Group C.

If your child is in **GROUP A:**

<p>Monday & Tuesday</p> <p>IN-SCHOOL</p>	<p>Wednesday, Thursday & Friday</p> <p>REMOTE FROM HOME</p>
<p>7:55am-12:05pm**- In-person learning</p>	<p>A structured schedule of live instruction with teachers through Zoom sessions and pre-recorded teacher videos, web links, skills programs, and/or selected choice activities. Students will also receive small group and/or individual sessions for tutoring, specialized support, and teletherapy services.</p>

If your child is in **GROUP B:**

<p>Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday</p> <p>REMOTE FROM HOME</p>	<p>Thursday & Friday</p> <p>IN-SCHOOL</p>
<p>A structured schedule of live instruction with teachers through Zoom sessions and pre-recorded teacher videos, web links, skills programs, and/or selected choice activities. Students will also receive small group and/or individual sessions for tutoring, specialized support, and teletherapy services.</p>	<p>7:55am-12:05pm**- In-person learning</p>

If your child is in **Group C:**

<p>Monday & Tuesday</p> <p>IN-SCHOOL</p>	<p>Wednesday</p> <p>REMOTE FROM HOME</p>	<p>Thursday & Friday</p> <p>IN-SCHOOL</p>
<p>7:55am-12:05pm**- In-person learning</p>	<p>A structured schedule of live instruction with teachers through Zoom sessions and pre-recorded teacher videos, web links, skills programs, and/or selected choice activities. Students will also receive small group and/or individual sessions for tutoring, specialized support, and teletherapy services.</p>	<p>7:55am-12:05pm**- In-person learning</p>

**** Start and end times are subject to change in the event buses will be disinfected/cleaned between routes.**

We will be sending out a short survey via Blackboard Connect within the next week asking you to select your choice of Option 1 or Option 2. If you choose Option 2, you will be assigned Group A, B or C as determined by the district.

We understand and appreciate that it is difficult to make a fully-informed decision about your child(ren)'s instruction without receiving the final re-opening plan (as it is being developed) and without knowing the course the current health crisis will take; therefore, you will be given the opportunity to change your selection immediately after the final plan is released.

I also wanted to share the following information with you at this time:

- We are currently exploring options to offer limited after-school care at DTS.
- For Groups A and B, we will automatically keep students from the same family in the same cohort.
- If you have children attending other schools and would like to coordinate their schedules, we will do so to the extent possible. If you are coordinating childcare with other DTS families, we will also do our best to accommodate similar schedules but cannot guarantee it. The short survey you receive will provide a place for you to indicate a special request such as those mentioned above, along with the reason(s) for the request.
- Wednesday will be a day of remote instruction for all students and include teacher office hours, synchronous check-ins, and virtual supplemental supports. It will also allow for deep cleaning of our school.
- With the implementation of the instructional schedule noted above, we are proposing a change in the first day of school for students to Tuesday, September 8, 2020. This will allow for increased planning and professional development for our staff. The revised school calendar will be on the August 27, 2020 Board of Education meeting agenda for consideration.
- Per the survey questions regarding devices, we will be contacting you in late August regarding the Chromebook distribution. We will work with you on internet access if you indicated that was an issue and will also be offering to loan Chromebooks to families so that each child has access to his/her own device during specified learning times.
- We are working with our food service provider on the details of meal distribution for in-person and remote learning days. There will not be a lunch period at school.

The NJDOE and Governor's office are still producing other facets of the re-opening plan guidance for school districts. As we all know, the current health crisis is a fluid situation and is subject to change as the situation dictates. As we plan for the reopening of school, we must also all prepare for the possibility of schools not reopening in September. I understand it is difficult to make your plans for your family while waiting for all the details about the school reopening and really appreciate your patience as we continue to work out the details and changing situations. You've been great through all of this and on behalf of the administration, staff, District Restart Committee and Board of Education, I want to thank you for your continued support and optimism as we take the next steps in this journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Steinhauer-Kula". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Steinhauer-Kula

